

Whistlin' Dixie

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Artist Statement

Many youth in the US come of age flipping through TV channels or scouring the internet in search of queer life. They are eventually drawn out of their small towns and into the “gay ghettos” of New York or San Francisco, motivated by a lack of queer visibility in their own hometown. *Whistlin' Dixie*, however, seeks out folks at the forefront of the Southern queer music scene — living examples that queer community can thrive in these previously written off country roads and postindustrial cities. This documentary showcases these communities and examines their influences, challenges and motivations while putting a face on what it means to be queer, young and Southern.

Each stop on the road provides new characters, scenes, and sounds, tracking the lives of queer musicians and activists from North Carolina to Kentucky. On screen, these characters articulate their unique coming out processes, ties to family history and investments in producing a more tolerant and politically progressive South. These testimonies help convey just how vital queer community is in the South and how these artists are working to insure its future.

Growing up queer in a series of small, suburban towns all over the US, I have always been drawn to creative means of forming queer community. I was inspired to make *Whistlin' Dixie* after witnessing both the beauty of the South, the strength of its queer music scene and the region's lack of academic and social visibility within the larger queer population. Many people I've talked to, from California to New York, were completely unaware that queers even existed in the South. I wanted to open people's eyes and change their minds by proving that queer community is not only possible, but can thrive outside of the big metropolitan areas that dot our coasts.

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